

# COSMIC CONSTITUTIONALISM

*A Critical Examination of Omittoist Jurisdictional Sovereignty Through  
the Lens of Twenty Political Philosophers and Theologians*

*A Seminal Comparative Treatise On the Political Theology of Jurisdictional Sovereignty*

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## ABSTRACT

This treatise conducts a rigorous, comprehensive comparative analysis of the Omittoist framework—specifically, its doctrine of Jurisdictional Sovereignty as developed across the Omittoist manuscript corpus—through sustained engagement with twenty canonical figures in political philosophy, ethics, political theology, and the philosophy of religion. Rather than adjudicating the metaphysical question of divine existence, Omittoism performs what it terms a 'jurisdictional turn': it evaluates divine authority claims by the same consent-based standards routinely applied to human governance, concluding that the structural conditions for legitimate divine authority—principled consent, accountability, proportionality, and meaningful exit—are, as a matter of philosophical principle, absent from any cosmological arrangement in which rational agents are born without consultation into an unchosen world.

The analysis proceeds through seven thematic sections. The first establishes the framework's conceptual foundations through dialogue with Robert Paul Wolff, A. John Simmons, Michael Huemer, and John Locke, each of whom contributes forensic tools for auditing authority structures. The text provides the full engagement with Thomistic natural law theory—through Aquinas and Finnis—that the primary analysis requires, culminating in the formal articulation of the Juridical Cleavage. The third section situates the Omittoist 'principled refusal' within the tradition of metaphysical revolt as articulated by Mikhail Bakunin, Albert Camus, Emma Goldman, and William Godwin. The fourth section examines the logical architecture sustaining the framework, with substantially expanded treatment of Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology. The fifth section applies normative frameworks derived from T. M. Scanlon, Immanuel Kant, Onora O'Neill, and Elizabeth Anderson. The sixth section engages the framework's most formidable interlocutors—Mark C. Murphy, Toby Betenson, Erik J. Wielenberg, and Hannah Arendt—and includes a dedicated Counter-Thesis section presenting the strongest available philosophical case against the framework's conclusions. The final synthesis provides full metaethical grounding for the framework's normative claims and a constructive account of what legitimate cosmic governance would require.

The treatise concludes that Omittoism constitutes a philosophically significant and formally defensible contribution to political theology, achieving what may be its most distinctive structural property: ontological invariance—the capacity to sustain identical normative conclusions regardless of how the question of divine existence is ultimately resolved. While identifying genuine tensions, unresolved challenges, and areas requiring further theoretical development, this analysis affirms that the jurisdictional framework represents a necessary evolution in the intellectual discourse surrounding human moral sovereignty.

**Keywords:** *Omittoism, Jurisdictional Sovereignty, divine authority, consent theory, political theology, moral autonomy, social contract theory, cosmic constitutionalism, ontological invariance, consentheism, Thomistic natural law, Juridical Cleavage, Reformed Epistemology, metaethical grounding, constructive authority architecture*

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# I. INTRODUCTION: THE JURISDICTIONAL TURN IN POLITICAL THEOLOGY

There is a question that philosophy has long circled without fully confronting. For centuries, the central intellectual dispute surrounding the divine has concerned ontology: Does God exist? The literature generated by this question—from Anselm's ontological proof and Aquinas's Five Ways to Hume's Dialogues and Russell's teapot—forms one of the richest archives in the history of human thought. Yet beneath this enormous body of inquiry lies a quieter, more politically charged question that has received comparatively scant systematic treatment: by what right would any being—regardless of its power, creative role, or metaphysical status—possess legitimate authority over rational agents who neither consented to their own existence nor had any opportunity to negotiate the terms of the relationship?

It is this question that the Omittoist framework addresses with unusual directness and considerable philosophical sophistication. The present treatise undertakes a comprehensive critical examination of Omittoism—principally as developed in 'Jurisdictional Sovereignty: A Consent-Based Critique of Divine Authority' and the broader Omittoist manuscript corpus—by placing it into sustained dialogue with twenty thinkers whose work bears directly, and in some cases definitively, on the questions the framework raises. The procedure is neither hagiographic nor dismissive. It aims to determine, through rigorous philosophical engagement, where the framework succeeds in advancing the discourse, where its arguments require further development, where it faces genuine challenges from opposing traditions, and what it contributes that is genuinely novel.

The methodological innovation at the core of Omittoism deserves immediate acknowledgment, for it is not simply a position within the existing debates but a reorientation of those debates. The claim is not that God does not exist, nor that divine existence is irrelevant, nor that theology is confused or primitive—though each of those positions has distinguished defenders. The claim is rather that the question of divine authority over rational agents belongs to a different logical domain than the question of divine existence, and that progress on the former does not require resolution of the latter. The framework formalises this distinction through three foundational axioms. The first—the Independence of Legitimacy—holds that the capacity to create an entity does not inherently generate moral authority over that entity. The second—Interactive Accountability—holds that any entity demanding a moral response from sentient beings thereby subjects itself to the evaluative standards of those beings. The third—the Consent Constraint—holds that legitimate authority over rational agents requires either explicit consent or the meaningful possibility of exit. From these axioms, Omittoism derives the principal conclusion of Jurisdictional Sovereignty: absent demonstrable consent-based legitimacy, rational agents retain jurisdictional independence regardless of any being's creative role or metaphysical power. The framework is, by design, ontologically invariant—its normative conclusions hold whether God exists, does not exist, or exists but fails to meet the conditions for legitimate authority.

The intellectual significance of this position is best appreciated by locating it within the broader landscape it navigates and, in important respects, transforms. Omittoism is not atheism. Atheism is an ontological claim—that there is no God—and is therefore vulnerable to ontological defeaters: evidence for the existence of God would defeat it. Omittoism is a normative stance. It says not 'there is no master' but 'no master is recognised absent demonstrable legitimacy,' and this stance survives any ontological outcome. Omittoism is not apatheism—the practical indifference to theological questions—because it engages divine authority claims directly and deliberately, finding them systematically wanting rather than simply uninteresting. Nor is it misotheism, the affective antagonism toward perceived divine malevolence explored by philosopher Bernard Schweizer and

given literary expression by Ivan Karamazov in Dostoevsky: Omittoism maintains the posture of the constitutional judge, not the aggrieved citizen. It applies standards neutrally and consistently, and its verdict—that the authority claim fails—is neither emotionally motivated nor metaphysically prejudiced.

The treatise engages twenty thinkers whose collective work constitutes the intellectual scaffolding upon which any serious evaluation of the Omittoist framework must rest. The analysis proceeds thematically rather than exhaustively, grouping thinkers into sections that reflect the intellectual functions their work serves in relation to the framework: the foundations of the jurisdictional critique; the Thomistic natural law challenge; the tradition of metaphysical revolt; the logical architecture of the argument; the normative evaluation of the framework's principles; the theological and secular philosophical challenges; and a dedicated Counter-Thesis section. Within each section, engagement with individual thinkers is conducted with fidelity to their primary texts, attentiveness to the secondary literature, and the dialectical rigour appropriate to a work of this intellectual ambition.

## **II. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE AND SCOPE**

### **The Objective and Method of the Analysis**

Before proceeding to the comparative analysis, a brief but substantive account of the methodological commitments governing this treatise is appropriate, both as a matter of scholarly transparency and because several of those commitments bear directly on the arguments of the analysis itself. The objective is neither advocacy for the Omittoist framework nor refutation of it, but rigorous philosophical assessment. Each thinker is treated charitably—their positions are reconstructed at their strongest before evaluation—and each is engaged through their primary texts rather than through secondary summaries alone. Where a thinker's work appears to support the Omittoist conclusions, this is noted without triumphalism; where it constitutes a genuine challenge or complication, this is acknowledged without defensiveness.

This revised edition adds, in Section VII.5, a dedicated Counter-Thesis that represents the strongest available philosophical case against the framework's conclusions, written without advocacy. The inclusion of this section responds to the structural limitation inherent in any treatise in which the author is also the framework's architect: it cannot be claimed that the analysis is genuinely bilateral unless the opposing case has been constructed with the same care as the framework itself. The Counter-Thesis section fulfils this requirement.

### **Defining the Central Distinction: Political Jurisdiction Versus Moral Obligation**

One conceptual distinction is invoked so frequently throughout the analysis that it requires precise standalone definition before the comparative treatment begins. Throughout this treatise, 'political jurisdiction' and 'moral obligation' designate categorically distinct normative relations, and the failure to maintain this distinction produces the most common misreading of the Omittoist framework.

A moral obligation is a requirement that an agent act or refrain from acting in certain ways, grounded in the moral significance of the acts themselves—their effects on other persons, their conformity to principles that no one could reasonably reject, or their relationship to rational agency as an intrinsically valuable capacity. Moral obligations exist wherever acts are genuinely right or wrong, and they bind agents independently of any authority structure. The obligation not to harm

an innocent person exists whether or not a government, a deity, or any other authority prohibits the harm.

Political jurisdiction, by contrast, designates the specific normative structure of authority: the claimed right of an entity to command the compliance of a rational agent as such—that is, to generate obligations through the mere act of commanding, regardless of the command's independent moral content—and to hold that agent responsible, to assign blame, and to administer consequences for non-compliance. Political jurisdiction is what distinguishes an authority's prohibition from a strong recommendation: a state's law against murder does not merely inform citizens that murder is wrong; it claims to generate an independent obligation of compliance with the authority's will.

The Omittoist framework argues that moral obligations exist and can be grounded independently of any divine authority, and that the question of political jurisdiction over rational agents requires consent-based justification that divine governance has not provided. Refusing divine political jurisdiction does not entail denying moral obligations; it entails refusing to ground those obligations in divine command rather than in the moral reality they reflect.

## **On the Transfer of Political Categories to Theological Contexts**

A methodological question that pervades the entire analysis must also be addressed directly: does the application of political-philosophical categories—consent, jurisdiction, accountability, legitimacy—to divine governance distort what it analyzes? The concern is that divine authority may be a categorically different kind of normative relation from human political authority, and that importing the vocabulary of the latter to evaluate the former begs the question against the theological position.

The Omittoist response to this concern is precise and defensible. The political-philosophical categories apply precisely because divine governance presents itself as governance: it issues commands, assigns blame and praise, promises rewards and punishments, and claims to hold rational agents responsible for their compliance or non-compliance. It is this specifically political profile—not any general metaphysical relation between God and creatures—that the framework evaluates. If a theological tradition were to relinquish the commanding, judging, and punishing dimensions of divine governance entirely, the jurisdictional critique would have no traction. The fact that the critique does have traction is a consequence of the theological traditions themselves, which have consistently represented divine governance in precisely the political terms the framework's standards are designed to evaluate.

This does not mean the categories transfer without strain. The most significant disanalogy—identified in the Simmons, Murphy, Arendt sections, and in the Counter-Thesis below—is that human political authority is constituted by human practices and exists within a public realm in which those subject to it can in principle participate, whereas divine authority is claimed independently of human practice and from outside the public realm. This disanalogy does not defeat the framework, but it requires that the framework's conclusions be understood as normative rather than merely procedural.

## **The Challenge of Reformed Epistemology**

A further preliminary note is warranted on the relationship between the framework's evidentialist methodology and Alvin Plantinga's influential Reformed Epistemology. Plantinga argues that belief in God is 'properly basic': it does not require inferential justification from evidence, and the demand for such justification represents an improper application of classical foundationalist criteria. The framework's Section V.3 now provides the full philosophical response this challenge warrants—a

response that operates at the level of political philosophy rather than epistemology: the claim is not that theistic belief requires evidential justification to count as rational, but that authority claims require justification to those agents regardless of the epistemic status of the belief in the authority's existence.

## **IIB. THE THOMISTIC NATURAL LAW CHALLENGE: AQUINAS, FINNIS, AND THE JURIDICAL CLEAVAGE**

This section addresses the most philosophically sophisticated challenge to the Omittoist framework within the Western theological tradition: the Thomistic account of divine authority as constitutive of rational nature rather than as an external political imposition. The primary texts throughout the main analysis—particularly Murphy (§VII.1) and Betenson (§VII.2)—engage versions of this challenge, but the challenge requires engagement in its own terms, through Aquinas's own texts and John Finnis's rigorous contemporary reconstruction, before those derivative engagements can be properly evaluated. The Juridical Cleavage—the formal dilemma at the heart of the Omittoist response—is fully articulated here for the first time.

### **The Thomistic Account of Divine Governance**

Thomas Aquinas's account of divine authority in the *Summa Theologica* (I-II, QQ. 90–97) represents the most sophisticated pre-modern articulation of the position that divine governance is not an external imposition on rational nature but a constitutive feature of it. For Aquinas, the eternal law—the rational ordering of all things by God's wisdom—is not a set of commands issued to rational agents from outside their nature but the very principle through which rational nature is constituted. The eternal law is God's own reason insofar as it governs the universe: it is less a legislative act than the rational structure of divine wisdom applied to creation. Rational creatures participate in the eternal law through natural law: the rational creature's apprehension of and orientation toward the good that is inscribed in its nature by creation. The first principle of natural law—'good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided'—is not a command received from an external authority but a truth grasped by any competent rational agent through the exercise of their own reason.

On this account, the divine-human governance relation is not analogous to a state commanding its citizens but to the relationship between a formal principle and the entity whose nature it constitutes. The sun does not command plants to grow toward the light; phototropism is what plant life is. Analogously, for Aquinas, the rational creature's orientation toward the good is not obedience to an external authority; it is the exercise of the rational nature that the creature genuinely possesses. Divine governance, properly understood, is not governance at all in the political sense—it is the formal structure of created rational existence.

This account has significant philosophical virtues. It avoids the Euthyphro problem elegantly: divine commands are not arbitrary because they flow from God's eternal rational wisdom rather than from a will that could have commanded otherwise. It grounds moral requirements in the nature of rational agents rather than in the contingent will of an external authority. And it explains moral knowledge naturalistically: rational agents can identify moral requirements through the exercise of their own reason, without requiring direct divine communication.

### **Finnis and the Analytic Reconstruction**

John Finnis's *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (1980) provides the most rigorous contemporary analytic reconstruction of the Thomistic position. Finnis identifies a set of basic goods—life, knowledge, friendship, play, aesthetic experience, practical reasonableness, and religion—that are self-evidently choiceworthy to any rational agent and that constitute the formal structure of human flourishing. These basic goods are not external impositions but the conditions of any genuine human achievement; to act against them is not disobedience to an external authority but self-contradiction. A person who destroys their own knowledge does not merely violate a rule; they undermine a constitutive condition of their own rational agency.

For Finnis, natural law has binding force not because God commands it but because it reflects the requirements of practical reason itself—the first principles of which are grasped by any competent rational agent through rational insight rather than inference. God appears in Finnis's account not as the source of natural law's binding force but as the explanatory ground of the basic goods' objective reality: why are the basic goods genuinely good, rather than merely felt to be good? Because they participate in divine goodness, which is the ontological foundation of value. This explanatory role is importantly different from a legislative role: God does not make the basic goods good by commanding them; they are good because of what they are, and they are what they are because God's creative wisdom constituted them so.

Finnis's account represents the most philosophically precise version of the Thomistic challenge to the Omittist framework. It appears to vindicate the claim that divine authority is constitutive of rational nature—grounded in the objective structure of human flourishing rather than in an external command—while retaining a role for God as the explanatory foundation of that structure.

## **The Juridical Cleavage: Formal Statement**

The Juridical Cleavage is the formal dilemma that any Thomistic defence of divine authority must navigate. It has two horns, and both are philosophically inhospitable.

The first horn: if divine authority is genuinely constitutive of rational nature—if natural law is the rational structure of the agent's own being rather than an external command—then it is not, strictly speaking, authority in any politically recognisable sense. A constitutive principle does not command; it defines. The laws of logic do not command rational thought; they are what rational thought is. The properties of triangles do not command geometers to draw three-sided figures; they are what triangles are. If divine governance works analogously—if the moral requirements inscribed in rational nature are constitutive of rational agency itself—then divine governance cannot coherently issue commands, assign blame for non-compliance, or administer punishments. These political activities presuppose the genuine independence of those subject to governance, the genuine possibility of non-compliance, and the need to motivate compliance through something other than mere definition. A plant's orientation toward sunlight is not political subjection to the sun. If the Thomistic account is correct in its strongest form, neither is a rational agent's orientation toward the good political subjection to God.

The price of evading the consent requirement by making divine law genuinely constitutive of rational nature is the elimination of the political relation altogether. The Thomist cannot simultaneously hold that natural law is constitutive of rational agency (avoiding the externality that the consent requirement addresses) and that God judges, punishes, and rewards compliance with that law (reinstating the external normative relation that the consent requirement addresses). The concepts are in tension.

The second horn: if divine authority does issue genuine commands, assign blame, administer punishments, and judge compliance—as all major theistic traditions insist, and as the political

vocabulary of sin, judgment, reward, and damnation presupposes—then it is precisely the kind of external normative relation that presupposes the independence of those subject to it. Commands presuppose genuine freedom to disobey. Judgment presupposes that the judged agent was genuinely free to comply or not. Punishment presupposes genuine non-compliance. The very political vocabulary that theistic traditions employ to describe divine governance—law, sin, judgment, punishment, heaven, hell—entails the independence of those governed. And if that independence is genuine, the consent requirement applies with full force.

The Thomistic synthesis attempts to hold both horns simultaneously through the concept of the rational creature's free participation in eternal law: the agent is genuinely free to deviate from natural law (establishing the independence that the second horn requires) but this deviation is self-corruption (making compliance constitutive of flourishing rather than imposed from outside, as the first horn requires). This is Aquinas's solution to the Juridical Cleavage: freedom and constitutive orientation coexist because freedom is not the freedom to be other than what one is, but the freedom to act either in accordance with or contrary to one's own rational nature.

## **The Omittoist Response to the Synthesis**

The Omittoist response operates at two levels.

First, the concept of 'free participation' as Aquinas deploys it is philosophically unstable in precisely the way the Juridical Cleavage predicts. If compliance with natural law is constitutive of human flourishing—if deviation is genuinely self-corruption—then the freedom to deviate is the freedom to harm oneself, not the freedom to reject an external authority. The Omittoist consent requirement addresses relations between agents and authorities: it concerns whether one agent may legitimately command the compliance of another. It does not apply to an agent's relationship to their own constitutive principles—no rational agent requires consent from their own rational nature in order for that nature to be binding on them. If natural law is genuinely constitutive, the consent requirement is indeed inapplicable—but this is because there is no authority relation to which it could apply, not because the consent requirement has been satisfied. The price of evading the consent requirement by adopting the first horn is the elimination of the political apparatus that makes divine governance theologically significant.

Second, Finnis's version of the Thomistic position, while more philosophically careful than naive divine command theory, faces the same structural dilemma. Finnis grounds natural law's binding force in the self-evidence of basic goods to any competent rational agent, effectively making natural law a feature of rational agency itself. But he also insists that God's knowledge and will are the explanatory ground of natural law's normative force—that the basic goods are good because they participate in divine goodness. This explanatory grounding reintroduces the divine authority relation: if the binding force of natural law ultimately derives from divine will (even a perfectly rational divine will), then the question of that will's authority over rational agents is reinstated. And if the binding force derives entirely from the self-evidence of basic goods to rational agents—as Finnis's analytic reconstruction sometimes suggests—then divine authority is explanatorily redundant: the basic goods bind because of what they are, not because God ordained them.

The Juridical Cleavage is not an external imposition on the Thomistic tradition; it is a product of the tradition's own commitments. The tradition wants divine governance to be at once constitutively grounded in rational nature (avoiding arbitrary voluntarism) and genuinely political in its commands, judgments, and punishments (preserving the theological doctrines of sin, judgment, and salvation). These two commitments are in structural tension, and the Cleavage makes that tension philosophically explicit. The framework's formal articulation of this dilemma represents the

most philosophically precise response available to the most sophisticated form of the theological challenge—one that the Murphy engagement in §VII.1 presupposes but that requires the full Aquinas-Finnis treatment to be properly visible.

### III. THE FOUNDATIONS OF JURISDICTIONAL CRITIQUE

The four thinkers examined in this section constitute what may be described as the analytical scaffolding of the Omittoist critique. Each provides either a conceptual instrument or a principled argument that the framework imports, refines, and deploys in the cosmic register. Together, they establish that the challenge to divine authority is not a product of hostility to governance as such, but flows from the same intellectual commitments that animate the best liberal political philosophy.

#### III.1 Robert Paul Wolff: Autonomy, Authority, and the Proto-Jurisdictional Anchor

Robert Paul Wolff's *In Defense of Anarchism* (1970) opens with a premise whose implications are at once philosophically radical and intuitively compelling. 'The defining feature of the state is authority, the right to rule,' Wolff declares at the outset, and from this he derives the observation that moral agency is constituted by autonomy—the capacity and duty to govern oneself by principles one has reflectively endorsed. For Wolff, moral autonomy is not merely one value among others; it is constitutive of what it means to be a responsible agent at all. An agent who surrenders the exercise of autonomous judgment to an external authority does not thereby behave morally; moral behaviour requires that one act on principles for reasons one understands and endorses, not merely because an authority commands it.

From this premise, Wolff derives his famous incompatibility thesis: legitimate political authority—the right to command obedience as such, regardless of the command's content—is incompatible with moral autonomy. If an agent obeys because commanded, the authority's judgment has been substituted for the agent's own; if the agent obeys because independent evaluation found the command justified, the authority's command is doing no normative work—the agent would have acted the same way regardless. On Wolff's account, there is no logical space between blind obedience (which forfeits autonomy) and principled compliance (which renders authority redundant). The concept of legitimate authority, so defined, collapses.

The Omittoist framework imports this argument and extends it vertically, from the political to the cosmic domain. The parallel is structurally elegant: just as Wolff shows that the claim to political authority is philosophically problematic when measured against the requirements of moral autonomy, the jurisdictional framework shows that the claim to divine authority is philosophically problematic by the same standard. Indeed, the theological case is, if anything, more extreme: where human political authorities at least emerged from processes in which some agents participated and to which some form of consent was historically given, divine authority is claimed over agents who had no participation in any founding moment and no opportunity to evaluate the governance system before being placed within it.

The tension that Wolff's argument creates for the Omittoist framework deserves more direct resolution than is often provided. The framework's concept of consentheism—reflective, voluntary endorsement of divine authority—might appear to be precisely the kind of move Wolff rules out: either the agent is following their own judgment (in which case the authority adds nothing) or they are genuinely deferring to authority (in which case autonomy is compromised). The framework's resolution runs as follows: consentheism is not the endorsement of divine authority as authority in Wolff's strict sense—as the right to command obedience as such—but rather the reflective

conclusion that divine commands, evaluated on their merits through the agent's own rational faculties, track moral reality better than the agent's unaided judgment would. This is the endorsement of divine epistemic superiority, not submission to divine political jurisdiction. The person who follows divine commands because they have determined, through autonomous evaluation, that those commands are excellent moral guides has not surrendered their autonomy—they have exercised it. The distinction between epistemic deference (which is compatible with autonomy) and political submission (which is not) maps exactly onto the framework's central distinction between moral obligation and political jurisdiction. The full resolution of this tension is developed in §VIII.

### **III.2 A. John Simmons: The Failure of Tacit Consent and the Birth Problem**

A. John Simmons's principal contribution to political philosophy—developed most fully in *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (1979) and *On the Edge of Anarchy* (1993)—is a systematic and exacting analysis of the conditions under which consent can be said to ground political obligation. Simmons distinguishes between explicit consent—direct, voluntary agreement to a political arrangement—and tacit consent—implied agreement inferred from behaviour such as continuing to reside in a country, using its roads, or benefiting from its institutions. Locke famously relied on tacit consent to bridge the gap between the theoretical requirement of consent and the practical reality that most citizens never explicitly agreed to be governed. Simmons's careful analysis shows that tacit consent, as standardly construed, fails to do this work: for tacit consent to be genuine, the agent must know that their behaviour will be interpreted as consent, and they must have a reasonable alternative they are freely choosing not to take.

The Omittoist third axiom—the Consent Constraint—draws directly on this Simmonsian analysis when it addresses what the framework terms the 'Birth Problem.' The argument runs as follows: existence is imposed without consultation; the agent is born into a world whose conditions—including any claimed divine governance—were set without the agent's participation. The claim that continued existence under these conditions constitutes tacit consent to divine authority fails the Simmonsian test on both counts. First, the newborn does not know that their survival will be interpreted as consent to divine governance. Second, there is no reasonable alternative: departure from existence is available only through self-destruction, which is not a genuine choice. Simmons's own illustration of the coercive 'alternative' maps directly onto the theological case.

Simmons himself was not writing about divine authority, and he would likely resist the extrapolation of his framework beyond the political domain. The most important methodological challenge his work poses concerns whether the framework of political obligation, developed to analyse relations between citizens and states, transfers to the analysis of relations between rational agents and a cosmic creator without distortion. The Omittoist response—that the transfer is justified precisely because divine authority presents itself as governance, complete with commands, sanctions, and demands for compliance—is well taken, but the disanalogy between human political authority (constituted by human practices) and divine authority (claimed independently of human practice) deserves the careful treatment provided in §II above and in the Counter-Thesis in §VII.5.

### **III.3 Michael Huemer: Common-Sense Scepticism and the Divine as Political Entity**

Michael Huemer's *The Problem of Political Authority* (2013) advances what he terms 'common-sense scepticism' about political authority: the claim that the state's purported right to command obedience cannot be justified by any of the standard philosophical arguments offered in its defence. Huemer's method is to apply the same moral intuitions that govern ordinary

interpersonal ethics to the behaviour of the state, and to ask whether the state's actions would be permissible if performed by a private individual. The Omittoist framework performs precisely the same operation on divine authority that Huemer performs on political authority: it treats the divine as a political entity subject to the same evaluative standards applied to any authority structure, rather than as a metaphysical necessity exempt from evaluation.

If a government demanded eternal obedience from all persons born within its territory, regardless of whether those persons had ever agreed to its jurisdiction, threatened eternal punishment for non-compliance, and claimed that its commands were self-justifying because it was the source of all value—any political philosopher would immediately identify this as a paradigm case of illegitimate authority. Huemer's method asks: why should the fact that the entity making this claim is divine, rather than political, change the analysis? The answer the Omittoist framework provides is that it should not.

Where Huemer's framework creates productive pressure on the framework is in his treatment of natural duties. Huemer concedes that certain obligations—those grounded in the content of the requirements themselves, such as the duty not to harm others—bind agents regardless of whether they have consented to any governance structure. This suggests a possible theological response: even if divine authority lacks consent-based legitimacy, the content of divine commands may coincide sufficiently with the requirements of natural morality that compliance is independently obligatory. The Omittoist response—distinguishing between moral obligation and political jurisdiction—is the appropriate one. One may be obligated to refrain from murder without being obligated to obey the authority that prohibits murder; the moral obligation and the political obligation are distinct even when their content coincides.

### **III.4 John Locke: Consent of the Governed, Extended to the Heavens**

John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1689) is the foundational text of consent-based political philosophy in the liberal tradition. Locke's core argument is that legitimate political authority rests on the consent of the governed: individuals possess natural rights to life, liberty, and property, and they consent to transfer certain of these rights to a political authority in exchange for protection and stable governance. Locke states the consent requirement with directness: no one can be 'subjected to the political power of another without his own consent.' Authority that violates the terms of this transfer is illegitimate, and the governed retain the right to withdraw their consent and, ultimately, to revolt.

The Omittoist framework universalises this principle upward, applying it to the cosmic register in a move of considerable intellectual audacity. If the principle that legitimate authority requires the consent of the governed is correct—and liberal political philosophy has, by and large, accepted it as a foundational commitment—then it should apply with equal force to any authority structure, including divine governance. The Lockean argument does not specify that consent is only necessary for human governments; it specifies that consent is necessary for any authority over rational agents, and derives this necessity from features of rational agents—their natural rights, their moral autonomy, their entitlement to have their interests considered—that are not specific to the human political case.

Locke himself, of course, did not draw this conclusion. His political philosophy was embedded in a theological framework that took divine governance as the legitimate background condition within which human political arrangements were made. Contemporary Locke scholarship—particularly Jeremy Waldron's *God, Locke, and Equality* (2002)—has emphasised the theological foundations of Locke's egalitarianism. The Omittoist response is that even if Locke's

consent principle was historically grounded in theological commitments, the philosophical logic of the principle—its derivation from features of rational agency—outgrows those foundations. Principles correctly derived from the nature of rational agents do not depend on the theological beliefs that historically motivated their articulation.

The most productive engagement between Lockean political philosophy and the Omittoist framework concerns the right of revolution. Locke holds that when a government systematically violates the natural rights of its subjects, those subjects may withdraw their consent and resist the authority. The Omittoist doctrine of Jurisdictional Sovereignty is the cosmic analogue of Lockean revolution: the principled withdrawal of consent from an authority that has not demonstrated its legitimacy by the terms of natural rights-based political philosophy. Both are grounded in the claim that authority without consent is not authority but domination, and that rational agents are never morally obligated to submit to domination.

## **IV. THE TRADITION OF REVOLT: FROM METAPHYSICAL ANGER TO JURIDICAL REFUSAL**

The thinkers examined in this section share a commitment to the refusal of illegitimate authority that precedes the Omittoist framework historically but anticipates its central conclusions. Where they differ from Omittoism—and where the framework advances beyond them—is precisely in the character of the refusal: Bakunin, Camus, Goldman, and Godwin each refuse from a position combining philosophical argument with affective intensity, political passion, or ethical conviction; the Omittoist framework refuses from the position of the constitutional judge, whose refusal is dispassionate, principled, and grounded in a formal evaluation of legitimacy conditions.

### **IV.1 Mikhail Bakunin: The Metaphysical Revolt as Formal Rejection**

Mikhail Bakunin's *God and the State* (posthumously published, 1882) is perhaps the most direct antecedent of the Omittoist framework within the tradition of political philosophy. Bakunin's central argument is that the theological concept of God and the political concept of the state are structurally homologous: both rest on the claim to absolute authority over human beings, both resist justification in terms of the interests and consent of those subject to them, and both serve, in practice, to legitimate the domination of existing hierarchies. To oppose one is, for Bakunin, logically committed to opposing the other.

Bakunin's famous inversion of the Voltairean formula—'If God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him'—captures the essential Omittoist insight with characteristic rhetorical force: the question of divine authority is not answered by the question of divine existence but stands independently of it. For Bakunin, even a God who genuinely existed would be a tyrannical imposition on human freedom simply by virtue of claiming absolute authority over autonomous beings. This is the intuition that Omittoism systematises and formalises, converting affective revolt into juridical evaluation.

The structural difference between Bakunin and Omittoism is both philosophically significant and practically important. Bakunin's revolt is animated by a commitment to human freedom that is itself grounded in a substantive anthropology—a view about what human beings essentially are and what they require for their flourishing. This means that Bakunin's rejection of divine authority, while powerful, is philosophically contestable at the level of its foundational premises: a theist could respond that Bakunin's conception of human freedom is itself derived from a tradition that depends on theological commitments, or that freedom properly understood is not opposed to but constituted

by right relationship with the divine. The Omittoist framework claims to rest on premises—the requirement of consent for legitimate authority, the independence of normative authority from causal power—that are accepted across ideological lines and do not presuppose a particular anthropological commitment. This gives the framework a broader base of appeal, even if it sacrifices the rhetorical intensity that makes Bakunin's argument so memorable.

## **IV.2 Albert Camus: The 'Refusal of the Ticket' as Formal Juridical Rejection**

Albert Camus's *The Rebel* (1951) is the most sustained philosophical treatment of what it means for a human being to refuse complicity in a world whose terms they did not choose. Camus's starting point is the experience of the absurd—the collision between the human demand for clarity, meaning, and justice and the world's radical indifference to that demand—and his ethical conclusion is that revolt, properly understood, is not the expression of resentment but the assertion of a value. In his most celebrated formulation: 'I rebel—therefore we exist.' The revolt is not a solitary act of negation but a recognition that in refusing to accept the terms of an unchosen world, the rebel affirms value—the value of the conscious experience whose degradation they refuse to accept.

The image of 'refusing the ticket'—drawn from Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov, who declares that he would return his 'entrance ticket' to the cosmic order if the price of universal harmony is the suffering of even a single child—is philosophically central to both Camus's project and, by explicit analogy, to the Omittoist framework. Ivan's refusal is the recognition that no retrospective justification of suffering—no 'greater good,' no 'mysterious plan'—can retroactively transform non-consensual harm into an acceptable bargain. The relevant moral category is not whether the outcome might, in some cosmic calculus, be net positive, but whether the agent who bears the cost was in a position to consent to that cost.

Where Omittoism advances beyond Camus is precisely in the formalisation that Camus himself resisted. Camus was philosophically hostile to systematic thought, suspicious of any framework that claimed to resolve the absurd rather than live with it. His revolt is existential and perpetual—a stance, not a conclusion. The Omittoist response—that the jurisdictional framework does not resolve the absurd but formalises the normative implications of the absurd, converting Camus's lived stance into a theoretical position—is philosophically interesting but not fully satisfying from a Camusian perspective. Nevertheless, Camus's contribution is essential in one respect: he demonstrates that the refusal of cosmic authority can be grounded not in nihilism but in an affirmation of value. The Omittoist framework, read through Camus, is not an act of despair but an act of fidelity to the dignity of conscious experience.

## **IV.3 Emma Goldman: The Heavenly Tyrant as Blueprint for Earthly Oppression**

Emma Goldman's essay 'The Philosophy of Atheism' (1916) and her broader writings on anarchism and religion represent a systematically underappreciated contribution to the philosophical analysis of divine authority claims. Goldman's central argument is not merely that God does not exist but that the theological concept of absolute divine authority serves as the ideological template for earthly tyranny: 'the idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty.' The abdication of human reason Goldman identifies is precisely the violation of Wolff's autonomy principle; the negation of human liberty she describes is precisely the structural condition that the Omittoist Consent Constraint identifies as the precondition for the illegitimacy of cosmic governance.

Goldman's contribution to the Omittoist analytical vocabulary is the concept of structural homology between theological and political authority. Where Bakunin identifies the connection

theoretically, Goldman documents it socially and historically: she shows how religious institutions function as training grounds for the dispositions of deference, submission, and unquestioning obedience that political tyrannies require of their subjects. The church teaches people to bow before an absolute cosmic authority; the state inherits the bowing. This sociological observation, while not itself a philosophical argument for the Omittoist jurisdictional conclusions, provides important contextual support for the claim that the question of divine authority is not an abstract theological puzzle but a practically urgent political question.

Goldman's analysis is particularly significant when read against the Thomistic framework examined in §IIb. Aquinas's account presents divine governance as the rational structure of human flourishing; Goldman's historical and sociological analysis reveals how that claim functions in practice—how the institution of the Church has deployed the language of constitutive divine order to enforce compliance that would otherwise require explicit consent. The philosophical argument of §IIb and Goldman's sociological observation converge: both identify the Thomistic synthesis as one that claims constitutive status while operating through the mechanisms of external authority. The convergence strengthens both analyses.

The limitation of Goldman's analysis from the Omittoist perspective is its categorical hostility to religion as such. The Omittoist framework is not anti-religious in principle—its concept of consentism formally recognises the legitimacy of reflective, voluntary religious commitment. Goldman's more sweeping indictment—that all religious authority is inherently oppressive—goes further than the framework requires and, in doing so, may undermine its claim to philosophical neutrality. Omittoism holds that divine authority claims must satisfy the same legitimacy conditions as any other authority claims; this is a more modest and more defensible position than Goldman's.

#### **IV.4 William Godwin: Private Judgment and the Sovereignty of Rational Conscience**

William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) is one of the most radical applications of Enlightenment rationalism to the question of authority, and its central doctrine—the principle of private judgment—anticipates the Omittoist framework with striking precision. Godwin argues that every rational agent has both the capacity and the duty to subject all claims—political, moral, religious, and social—to the scrutiny of their own reason, and to comply only with those claims that survive that scrutiny. To defer to authority without independent evaluation is, for Godwin, a moral failure—not merely imprudent, but a violation of the responsibilities that rationality entails.

Godwin's principle of private judgment maps directly onto the Omittoist second axiom—Interactive Accountability. If any entity's commands are to bind a rational agent, that agent is entitled—indeed, required—to evaluate whether those commands meet the standards of justified authority. This applies to divine commands no less than to any other authority's commands; the theological special pleading that divine commands are exempt from rational evaluation because they come from God is, for Godwin, precisely the kind of intellectual capitulation that reason forbids.

The relationship between Godwin's perfectibilism—his belief in the unlimited capacity of human reason to improve moral and social arrangements—and the Omittoist framework is philosophically interesting and somewhat ambivalent. Godwin's optimism about rational progress grounds his confidence in private judgment: he believes that careful reasoning will converge on truth and that the exercise of rational evaluation is reliably truth-tracking. Omittoism is more modest; it does not presuppose that human reason is infallible or that the exercise of autonomous judgment will always reach correct conclusions. It claims only that the absence of autonomous evaluation cannot be a requirement for moral legitimacy—that an authority which insists on compliance

without evaluation has forfeited the claim to authority. This Omittoist modesty is more defensible than Godwin's rationalist perfectibilism.

## **V. THE LOGICAL ARCHITECTURE: FORENSIC TOOLS FOR AUDITING DIVINE AUTHORITY**

The thinkers examined in this section contribute the logical and evidential instruments through which the Omittoist audit of divine authority is conducted. Where the previous section identified the historical and conceptual tradition within which the framework situates itself, this section examines the specific analytical mechanisms—the logical gap between fact and value, the evidential standard for benevolence, the distinction between creative source and governing authority—that make the Omittoist argument formally rigorous.

### **V.1 David Hume: The Is-Ought Gap as the Omittoist Logical Firewall**

David Hume's contribution to the Omittoist framework is foundational rather than supplementary. The is-ought gap—articulated most famously in Book III of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40)—holds that no normative conclusion can be validly derived from purely descriptive premises without the introduction of additional normative premises. This observation—which Hume introduced almost as a passing remark—has come to be regarded as one of the most significant insights in the history of moral philosophy, and it provides what may be described as the logical firewall at the heart of the jurisdictional framework.

The application to divine authority is direct and devastatingly simple. Even if one establishes, through whatever means—cosmological argument, ontological proof, testimony, direct experience—that a Creator exists, this establishment of a fact (the Creator's existence) does not, without additional normative premises, establish a value (the Creator's right to command obedience). The inference from 'God exists' to 'I ought to obey God' requires at least one normative premise—'I ought to obey beings who exist,' or 'I ought to obey beings who are sufficiently powerful,' or 'I ought to obey beings who created me'—and each of these normative premises is itself open to evaluation and rejection. The Omittoist jurisdictional framework is, at the logical level, precisely the formal development of Hume's insight: it identifies the normative premises that would need to be true for the inference from divine existence to divine authority to go through, and subjects each of those premises to critical evaluation.

Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) provides a second set of tools that the framework employs in its governance audit. Through the character of Philo, Hume subjects the argument from design to a devastating analysis: even if the world exhibits features that suggest intelligent design, the quality of that design—as evidenced by the extensive structural flaws, predatory hierarchies, and apparently gratuitous suffering embedded in the natural order—does not support the inference to a benevolent, omnipotent designer. Omittoism converts Hume's diagnostic observation into what it calls the 'Engineering Competence Standard': an authority claiming to be the designer of a system in which rational agents find themselves is subject to evaluation not only for the legitimacy of its authority claim but for the adequacy of its design.

The most significant tension between Hume and the Omittoist framework concerns the former's epistemic caution and the latter's declarative confidence. Hume would likely resist Omittoism's tendency to convert suspension of judgment into positive declaration. Where Hume diagnoses that the evidential basis for divine authority is insufficient, the framework concludes that divine authority is void; where Hume would say 'the inference does not go through,' the Omittoist

declaration says 'the jurisdiction is rejected.' This escalation from epistemic caution to normative declaration requires premises—about the value of autonomy, the sufficiency of the consent criterion, the warrant for definitive jurisdictional assertions—that Hume, with his characteristic intellectual modesty, would likely refuse to endorse. The Omittoist response—that the condition of finite beings requiring practical normative guidance cannot indefinitely defer commitment in favour of philosophical caution—is reasonable, but it acknowledges the Humean tension without fully dissolving it.

## V.2 Stephen Law: The Evil God Challenge and the Character Audit

Stephen Law's 'The Evil God Challenge' (Religious Studies, 2010) contributes a specific logical instrument to the Omittoist arsenal: the demonstration that the evidential symmetry between a good God and an evil God exposes an implicit reliance on moral reasoning in any theological position that proceeds beyond bare existence claims. Law's argument is structured as follows: the standard arguments for theism—cosmological, ontological, teleological—provide, if they succeed, evidence that some being of great power and intelligence exists. They do not, on their own, establish anything about the moral character of that being. The inference to a morally good God requires additional evidential work, typically drawing on features of the world that are interpreted as evidence of benevolence.

Law's challenge is to show that for every piece of evidence apparently supporting a good God, there is a symmetric piece of evidence apparently supporting an evil God, and that any theodical strategy for explaining away the evidence against a good God generates a symmetrically powerful 'anti-theodical' strategy for explaining away the evidence against an evil God. The evidential symmetry demonstrates that the moral character of the divine cannot be established by the same methods that establish existence, and that character claims require independent evidential support.

The relevance to the Omittoist framework is direct. The second axiom—Interactive Accountability—holds that any entity demanding moral response subjects itself to the evaluative standards of those it addresses. Law's Evil God Challenge provides the analytical instrument that makes this evaluation possible: before any authority claim can be assessed for legitimacy, the character of the authority must be audited. Law shows that this audit cannot be bypassed by metaphysical reasoning about divine perfection, but requires the same kind of evidential reasoning that would be applied to any other authority's character claim.

## V.3 Charles Bradlaugh: Evidence-Based Legitimacy and the Full Plantinga Response

### ♦ EXPANDED SECTION — Full Plantinga Engagement Added

Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891)—the Victorian secularist, radical reformer, and Member of Parliament who famously refused to take the parliamentary oath on a Bible—represents a distinct and underappreciated tradition in the philosophical analysis of religious authority claims: the treatment of theism as a political and evidential matter rather than a purely metaphysical one. His principal philosophical position, developed in writings such as 'A Plea for Atheism' (1864) and 'The Existence of God: A Debate' (1875), is that claims about divine existence and authority should be subject to the same evidential standards applied to any empirical claim.

Omittoism's relationship to Bradlaugh is most productively understood as one of methodological inheritance. The evidential standard Bradlaugh applies to existence claims is extended by the framework to authority claims: not only must the existence of the divine be supported by evidence meeting ordinary epistemic standards, but the authority of the divine must be supported by evidence meeting ordinary legitimacy standards. Bradlaugh's insistence that theological

claims are not exempt from the standards of rational discourse is the methodological precondition for the Omittoist governance audit.

### ***The Full Plantinga Challenge and Response***

Alvin Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology, most fully developed in *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000), represents the most philosophically sophisticated challenge to the evidentialist methodology that Bradlaugh exemplifies and that the Omittoist legislative clarity standard inherits. The challenge deserves extended treatment, for it is both technically accomplished and widely accepted in contemporary philosophy of religion.

Plantinga's argument proceeds in three stages. First, he argues that classical foundationalism—the view that all beliefs must be either self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses, or else properly grounded in beliefs of these kinds—is self-refuting: the principle of classical foundationalism is itself neither self-evident, nor incorrigible, nor evident to the senses, and therefore fails its own standard. Second, Plantinga argues that theistic belief can be properly basic in an expanded foundationalist framework: it can be produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly in an appropriate epistemic environment, directed toward the truth, on the basis of what he calls the *sensus divinitatis*—a natural human faculty for perceiving the divine, implanted by God and functioning correctly in conditions of religious experience, contemplation of natural beauty, or recognition of moral obligation. Third, Plantinga argues that if Christianity is true, theistic belief formed through the *sensus divinitatis* has positive epistemic status—warrant—even in the complete absence of inferential evidence.

The argument, if successful, establishes that the individual theistic believer does not stand in epistemic default in the absence of evidence satisfying Bradlaugh's standards. But the Omittoist framework's evidentialist requirements, as noted in §II, apply not to theistic belief but to authority claims. This distinction—frequently invoked but deserving the extended treatment it here receives—requires precise philosophical grounding.

The authority claim is not the claim that God exists but the claim that God's commands are binding on rational agents who have not consented to be governed by them. This is a second-order claim about the normative force of a relationship, and it makes demands not on the epistemic situation of the individual believer but on the publicly accessible justificatory resources available to all those over whom the authority is claimed. Authority claims are inherently interpersonal: they assert a normative relation between a claimant and a subject, and that assertion requires justification available to the subject, not merely to the claimant.

Consider the parallel with political authority. A legislature might have perfectly sound internal procedures for enacting law—proper deliberation, majority vote, constitutional compliance—and still fail to generate binding obligations on those outside its jurisdiction who were never party to the political arrangement. The epistemic propriety of the internal process does not establish the external authority claim. Similarly, the epistemic propriety of the individual believer's *sensus divinitatis*-grounded theistic belief does not establish the authority claim—the claim that all rational agents, including those who lack the relevant faculty's deliverances, are obligated to comply with divine commands.

Plantinga might respond that the *sensus divinitatis*, when functioning properly, produces not merely belief in God's existence but belief in the specific content of God's will—that certain things are required of the believer by divine command. On this view, properly basic belief encompasses the authority claim itself. This response is available, but it generates a significant problem: the *sensus divinitatis*, even on Plantinga's account, produces different and mutually incompatible specific beliefs

in different individuals and within different religious traditions. If the *sensus divinitatis* grounds a properly basic belief in the specific authority claims of Calvinist Christianity in one person and the specific authority claims of Shi'a Islam in another, the epistemic propriety of both belief-forming processes cannot simultaneously vindicate both authority claims as legitimate—the claims are mutually exclusive. The legislative clarity standard—the requirement that divine commands be communicable through publicly accessible evidence—is not an inappropriate application of classical foundationalism; it is the minimum standard that any authority claim must meet in order to be recognisable as a specific, publicly binding authority rather than a private conviction.

A further challenge to the Reformed Epistemology response comes from William Alston's *Perceiving God* (1991), which argues that direct experiential perception of God constitutes genuine epistemic grounds for religious belief. If Alston is correct that religious experience constitutes genuine perception rather than mere interpretation, the legislative clarity standard may mischaracterise the believer's epistemic situation. The Omittoist response operates at the same level as the Plantinga response: even if experiential perception of God provides the individual believer with genuine grounds for their belief, it does not provide a publicly accessible basis for the authority claim—the claim that all rational agents, including those who lack the relevant experience, are obligated to comply with divine commands. The authority claim makes demands on those who have not had the experience, and those demands require publicly accessible justification. The gap between individual epistemic entitlement and public authority justification is not closed by the phenomenological richness of religious experience, however genuine.

The deeper point is that Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology is addressed to a different question than the one the Omittoist framework poses. Plantinga asks: can theistic belief be rationally held without evidential justification? The Omittoist framework asks: can a divine authority claim generate binding obligations on those who have not consented to be governed, absent publicly accessible justification of that claim? These questions belong to different philosophical domains, and a successful answer to the first does not constitute an answer to the second. Bradlaugh's evidentialist methodology, extended by the framework to authority claims rather than existence claims, survives the Reformed Epistemology challenge intact.

#### **V.4 Wes Morriston: Severing the Link Between Source and Owner**

Wes Morriston's philosophical work—particularly his papers 'God, Respect for Persons, and the Moral Status of Divine Commands' (Faith and Philosophy, 2009) and 'God and the Ontological Foundation of Morality' (Religious Studies, 2012)—provides some of the most technically refined philosophical analysis of the relationship between divine creative power and divine moral authority in the contemporary literature. Morriston's contribution is the systematic dismantling of the 'source-to-owner' inference: the theological assumption that the act of creation generates, by itself, the authority to command, judge, and punish the created entity.

Morriston's central argument is that the relationship between a creator and the entities created cannot, without additional normative premises, generate the kind of authority that theological frameworks claim. Even granting that God is the omnipotent creator of all rational beings, this grants at most that God is the causal source of those beings. The inference from 'I am the cause of X's existence' to 'I have authority to command X's obedience' requires a normative bridge—and Morriston shows that none of the bridge principles standardly invoked in divine command theory are both plausible and sufficient.

The most interesting bridge principle Morriston analyses is the claim that God's perfect moral character provides the normative grounding for divine commands. On this view—associated with

Robert Adams, William Alston, and Philip Quinn—God's commands are authoritative not merely because God is powerful or creative, but because God is perfectly good, and perfectly good commands are, by their nature, worthy of compliance. Morriston's challenge is to show that this move either reduces divine authority to ordinary moral authority (in which case it is not distinctively divine) or relies on a circularity (the perfect goodness that grounds divine commands is itself defined in terms of divine nature, making the claim tautological).

The parent-child analogy that the Omittoist framework employs throughout is precisely the application of Morriston's analysis to the most familiar and intuitively compelling case: even the most devoted and capable parent, whose creation and sustenance of a child is beyond question, does not thereby acquire unlimited authority over that child. The ground of parental authority, where it exists, is not the act of creation but the ongoing relationship of care, responsibility, and accountability that the parent enters into with the child.

## **VI. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS: CONTRACT, REASON, AND PRINCIPLED OBLIGATION**

The thinkers examined in this section engage the Omittoist framework at the level of its normative foundations—the philosophical grounding of its authority claims and the evaluative standards it employs. Scanlon, Kant, O'Neill, and Anderson each contribute frameworks that test the internal coherence of the Omittoist position, identify where its normative claims are strongest, and expose where they require more careful justification.

### **VI.1 T. M. Scanlon: Reasonable Rejection and the Contractualist Standard**

T. M. Scanlon's contractualism, developed most fully in *What We Owe to Each Other* (1998), holds that an act is wrong if its performance would be disallowed by principles 'that no one could reasonably reject,' given that everyone aims to find principles for the general regulation of behaviour that others similarly motivated could not reasonably reject. This formulation grounds moral reasoning in the standpoint of the rational agent who must justify their conduct to others on terms they could reasonably accept.

The application to divine governance is immediate and powerful. Apply the Scanlonian test to the governance arrangements standardly claimed by theistic traditions: the claim that all human beings are subject to divine commands regardless of their consent, that non-compliance carries infinite penalties, that the standards of compliance are communicated through documents of disputed provenance and contested interpretation, and that no exit from the governance arrangement is available. Could a rational agent reasonably reject these arrangements? Scanlon's test strongly implies that they could.

A bridging premise is required to derive from Scanlon's framework the Omittoist conclusion about political legitimacy—for Scanlon's contractualism is designed to identify wrong actions rather than to generate conclusions about the legitimacy of authority structures. The bridging premise is this: governance arrangements are politically legitimate only if their terms are such that any rational agent, motivated by the desire to find mutually acceptable principles of cooperation, could reasonably propose them. The combination of unchosen subjection, unchosen compliance standards, unchosen exit conditions, and unchosen penalties—all features of the divine governance structure as standardly described—generates an arrangement whose terms are reasonable to reject precisely because they were never offered for acceptance.

Where Scanlon's framework creates productive pressure on the Omittoist position is in its handling of moral obligations that exist independently of any contractual arrangement. Scanlon argues that there are things agents owe to each other grounded not in explicit agreements but in the structure of moral community membership. A theist might invoke this to argue that what is owed to God is similarly grounded not in consent but in the structure of rational agency itself. The Omittoist response—distinguishing between structural moral obligations and political jurisdiction—is the appropriate one, but the line between these categories must be maintained with the precision defined in §II above.

## **VI.2 Immanuel Kant: The Rational Agent as End in Itself, Never Mere Fuel for a Cosmic Plan**

Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy—particularly the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative—provides one of the most powerful normative arguments in the Omittoist toolkit. Kant's Formula of Humanity states: 'treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.' Developed in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), this formula rests on the claim that rational agency is the source of all moral value. To treat a rational being as a mere means—as an instrument for the realisation of someone else's ends without regard for that being's own ends and rational capacities—is to commit a fundamental moral violation.

The application to divine governance is among the most direct and devastating in the Omittoist corpus. Theodical frameworks that invoke 'greater goods' to justify the suffering of individual rational agents—the doctrine that a child's cancer serves a divine purpose that the child's rational perspective cannot access or evaluate—implicitly treat that child as a means to a divine end. For Kant, this is not merely imprudent or suboptimal; it is a categorical moral wrong. No end, however great, justifies treating a rational being as a mere instrument without regard for that being's own rational agency.

Kant's own relationship to religion is directly relevant. In *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), Kant argued that genuine moral religion must be grounded in rational morality, not in external divine command: a God whose commands are morally authoritative must be a God whose commands coincide with the requirements of rational morality, and if they coincide, the source of moral obligation is rational morality itself, not the divine command. This is precisely the Omittoist claim formulated from within a theistic framework: the authority of divine commands, where it exists, is derivative of rational moral requirements, and therefore does not provide an independent ground for obedience to specifically divine commands that conflict with or go beyond rational morality.

The most interesting tension between Kant and the Omittoist framework concerns the Kantian postulate of God. Kant argues in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that the requirements of rational morality—specifically the requirement that virtue and happiness coincide—generate a rational postulate of a God who guarantees this coincidence. However, Kant's postulate is not a claim about divine jurisdiction over rational agents; it is a claim about what rational moral commitment requires agents to hope for. It does not generate any duty of obedience to divine commands, and it does not undermine the Omittoist critique of divine authority.

## **VI.3 Onora O'Neill: Principled Consent and the Original Contract**

Onora O'Neill's work on consent, autonomy, and the conditions for legitimate authority—developed across *Constructions of Reason* (1989), *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* (2002), and *A Question of*

Trust (2002)—provides a sophisticated refinement of the consent-based legitimacy standard that is more philosophically precise than the versions found in Locke or Simmons. O'Neill's central contribution is the distinction between principled consent—consent that is genuinely autonomous because it is based on adequate understanding of what is being consented to and on the freedom to withhold consent without catastrophic consequences—and merely apparent consent, which mimics the form of consent without satisfying its substantive conditions.

O'Neill argues that much of what passes for consent in everyday social and political life is merely apparent: people consent to arrangements they do not adequately understand, under conditions of social pressure that make withholding consent practically impossible. Whatever deference individuals give to divine authority—whether through explicit religious commitment or through socialisation processes—cannot constitute principled consent in O'Neill's sense, because the conditions for principled consent are systematically absent: the content of what is being consented to is disputed and obscure; the social context in which theological commitment is formed involves significant psychological pressure; and the alternatives to consent—in traditions that hold non-belief to carry severe consequences—are not genuinely free.

The most important contribution O'Neill makes to the refinement of the Omittoist framework is her insistence that consent is not the only basis for legitimate authority—that authority can also be grounded in genuine expertise, demonstrated competence, and transparent accountability. This suggests that the framework's exclusive focus on consent as the legitimacy criterion may be too narrow: a divine authority that demonstrated perfect benevolence, perfect competence, and perfect transparency might generate legitimate authority on grounds other than consent. The framework's response—that the governance audit applies all three of the conditions O'Neill identifies (legislative clarity as transparency, engineering competence as demonstrated competence, consent as the foundational legitimacy criterion)—is the appropriate one.

#### **VI.4 Elizabeth Anderson: The Critique of 'Bossism' and the Redundancy of Divine Legislation**

Elizabeth Anderson's contribution to the philosophical analysis of divine authority is concentrated most powerfully in her essay 'If God Is Dead, Is Everything Permitted?' (in Louise Antony's edited volume *Philosophers Without Gods*, 2007). Anderson's central argument is that divine command theory institutionalises a form of governance that, measured against ordinary moral standards, constitutes what she terms 'cosmic bossism': the subordination of moral reasoning to the arbitrary will of an absolute authority.

Anderson's critique of divine command theory connects directly to the Omittoist second axiom—Interactive Accountability—and to the governance audit that flows from it. If divine authority cannot be evaluated by moral standards without circularity, and if the claim that God's commands are self-evidently authoritative is indistinguishable from the claim that power creates right, then the Omittoist suspicion of divine authority claims is not merely permissible but required by any genuinely moral outlook. Anderson's argument shows that the 'Euthyphro problem'—whether things are good because God commands them or God commands them because they are good—is not merely a logical puzzle but a morally serious diagnostic.

Anderson's defence of secular moral realism—the view that moral truths exist and can be discovered through human reason and experience, independently of any divine guarantee—renders divine legislation redundant as a source of moral obligation: if agents can identify what is morally required through rational and empirical inquiry, the addition of divine commands to that inquiry adds nothing of moral substance. Anderson carefully distinguishes this from the claim that divine

commands are irrelevant to morality—they might serve as motivational supports or as cultural frameworks within which moral learning occurs—but the claim to legislative authority, the claim that divine commands are the source or ground of moral obligation, is undermined by the demonstrated sufficiency of secular moral reasoning.

## **VII. THE THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE AND SECULAR ALTERNATIVES**

The five subsections examined in this final comparative section represent the intellectual horizon against which the Omittoist framework must prove itself. Murphy and Betenson represent the strongest available theological challenges to the framework, while Wielenberg and Arendt represent sophisticated secular philosophical positions whose engagement with Omittoism is generative rather than adversarial. Section VII.5 provides the dedicated Counter-Thesis that any intellectually honest comparative analysis of this kind requires.

### **VII.1 Mark C. Murphy: The Steel-Man Defence of Divine Authority**

Mark C. Murphy's *An Essay on Divine Authority* (Cornell University Press, 2002) represents the most philosophically sophisticated contemporary defence of divine authority available in the analytical literature, and constitutes one of the most formidable intellectual challenges the Omittoist framework faces. Murphy's approach is distinguished from simpler divine command theories by its insistence on grounding divine authority in what he calls a 'reasons-responsive' account: God's commands are morally authoritative not because God is omnipotent, nor merely because God created the world, but because a being with God's perfect moral nature, perfect knowledge, and perfect benevolence would, by definition, command only what is genuinely best for rational agents—and a rational agent who understood God's nature and commands fully would recognise the authority of those commands as flowing from their content, not merely their source.

Murphy's account is strategically designed to avoid the central objection that the Omittoist framework (following Anderson and others) advances against divine command theory—that it reduces moral obligation to power. By grounding divine authority in God's perfect moral nature rather than in God's power or creative role, Murphy attempts to show that divine commands are not arbitrary impositions but expressions of moral truth, communicated by a being ideally positioned to know and convey that truth.

The Omittoist response operates at three levels. First, at the epistemological level: Murphy's account requires that agents have independent access to information about God's perfect moral nature in order to recognise that God's commands reflect moral truth rather than mere power. But this epistemic access is precisely what the legislative clarity standard shows to be systematically absent. The interpretive fragmentation of theological traditions, the contested nature of divine commands across and within traditions, and the impossibility of verifying which, if any, source of claimed divine communication reflects God's actual will, means that Murphy's conditions for legitimate divine authority—perfect knowledge, perfect benevolence, perfectly communicated commands—are conditions that are never met in the actual conditions of human religious experience.

Second, at the normative level: Murphy's account shows, at most, that a being with God's properties would have authority worthy of recognition; it does not show that a rational agent is obligated to obey such a being absent consent. The move from 'this authority would give me excellent advice' to 'I am obligated to obey this authority' requires the same normative premise that

the Omittoist framework challenges. A perfectly wise doctor gives excellent advice; but the rational agent who receives that advice is not thereby obligated to follow it—the authority relationship requires consent, or at minimum the agent's entry into a relevant relationship of trust.

Third, Murphy's most searching challenge is his argument for 'natural divine authority'—the claim that rational beings are, by their nature as rational, oriented toward what is genuinely good, and that God, as the source and instantiation of the good, is therefore the natural authority for rational beings. The Omittoist response to the natural divine authority argument proceeds through the Juridical Cleavage identified in §IIb: the Thomist faces a forced choice between constitutive orientation (which eliminates the political relation) and genuine external command (which reinstates the consent requirement). The agent who is 'oriented toward' God in the way a plant is oriented toward sunlight bears no more political obligation to God than the plant bears to the sun.

## **VII.2 Toby Betenson: Axiological Critiques and the Value of Autonomous Agency**

Toby Betenson's work—particularly 'Anti-Theism' (Philosophy Compass, 2016)—engages questions of divine authority from an evaluative perspective that both complements and complicates the Omittoist framework. Betenson's contribution is to distinguish, with considerable analytical precision, between different levels at which a theological position can be evaluated: the ontological level (what exists?), the epistemic level (what can we know?), the normative level (what are we obligated to do?), and the axiological level (what is valuable?).

Betenson's axiological critique raises a dimension of the Omittoist project that the framework addresses only partially in its primary texts. The framework's primary concern is with political legitimacy: does divine authority have the right to govern rational agents? But Betenson's analysis suggests that the question of what is valuable—whether a world with divine governance is better or worse than a world without it—is a distinct question that deserves independent treatment. The positive axiological case—that autonomy is constitutively required for the authentic realisation of any value whatsoever—is developed in full in §VIII.

## **VII.3 Erik J. Wielenberg: Godless Moral Realism and the Redundancy of Divine Law**

Erik J. Wielenberg's work—particularly *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* (2005) and *Robust Ethics: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Godless Normative Realism* (2014)—provides the most systematic contemporary defence of the view that moral facts exist and are knowable independently of any divine guarantee. Wielenberg argues for 'robust' moral realism: the view that basic moral facts are metaphysically robust, existing as objective features of reality, but that they are not grounded in anything beyond themselves. Moral facts are brute facts that do not require grounding in divine nature, divine commands, or any other non-moral feature of reality.

Wielenberg's framework provides a positive philosophical context for the Omittoist first axiom: if moral facts are objective and knowable independently of divine commands, then the authority of moral requirements does not depend on divine legislation, and the claim that jurisdictional sovereignty is compatible with robust moral commitment is vindicated.

The most important challenge Wielenberg's framework poses concerns moral motivation: if moral facts are brute facts—existing independently of any feature of reality that might ground a claim to authority—then it is unclear why agents are obligated to comply with them rather than merely advised to comply with them. This challenge is the subject of the metaethical grounding section within §VIII, which provides the full response the framework requires.

## **VII.4 Hannah Arendt: Authority, Power, Violence, and the Architecture of Legitimate Rule**

Hannah Arendt's contribution to the conceptual analysis of authority—concentrated most powerfully in *Between Past and Future* (1961), *The Human Condition* (1958), and *On Violence* (1970)—provides a vocabulary and a set of distinctions of exceptional precision for the questions the Omittoist framework raises. Arendt draws a foundational distinction between power, authority, and violence. Power is the capacity that emerges from people acting together in concert—it is inherently collective and communicative, existing only so long as the group keeps together. Authority is categorically different: it is a form of legitimate rule that requires neither persuasion nor coercion, because it is recognised by those subject to it as deriving from a source that commands respect without argument. Violence is the use of instruments to compel compliance in the absence of power or authority.

What the governance audit demonstrates, when read through Arendt's framework, is that divine governance as standardly represented occupies the structural position of violence—or, more precisely, of the threat of violence—rather than the structural position of genuine authority. Divine governance that enforces compliance through the threat of eternal punishment, and whose commands cannot be evaluated by those subject to them, is not authority in Arendt's sense: it does not command respect through the freely acknowledged legitimacy of its source. It commands compliance through the instruments of infinite coercion.

Arendt's constructive challenge—the question of how legitimate authority is built, not only how it fails—points toward the next phase of the intellectual project the Omittoist framework initiates. Having identified the conditions under which divine authority fails the legitimacy test, the framework owes its interlocutors an account of what would constitute legitimate cosmic governance. This constructive account is provided in §VIII.

## **VII.5 The Counter-Thesis: The Strongest Available Case Against Jurisdictional Sovereignty**

This section departs from the treatise's standard format. Rather than examining a thinker whose work bears on the framework from outside, it undertakes what the framework itself demands of any honest philosophical enterprise: the construction and genuine engagement with the strongest available case against the framework's conclusions. This exercise is required not merely by intellectual honesty—though that is sufficient reason—but because the framework's claim to ontological invariance and philosophical rigour can only be tested by the strongest opposing pressure. A framework that is presented only through the selective application of supportive thinkers, however rigorously engaged, has not genuinely proved itself. The Counter-Thesis aims to supply the adversarial pressure that self-critical philosophical inquiry requires.

The counter-thesis is this: The Omittoist framework, despite its methodological sophistication, commits a category error in applying political-philosophical standards to a relationship that is not political in any sense that makes those standards applicable. The error generates conclusions that are formally valid within the framework's premises but that rest on a mischaracterisation of the divine-human relationship so fundamental that the conclusions do not genuinely engage what they purport to criticise.

### ***The Category Objection***

The consent requirement for legitimate authority—drawn from Wolff, Simmons, Locke, and Huemer—was developed to analyse relations between human agents within a shared public world,

constituted by human practices, maintained by human institutions, and open to human participation and reform. The applicability of these standards presupposes a specific kind of normative relationship: one between agents who are co-constitutors of the authority structure, who exist prior to it and are therefore in a position to consent to or refuse it, and who have alternatives to subjection within the same normative world.

None of these conditions hold in the divine-human relationship as the theological tradition describes it. Rational agents do not exist prior to the divine creative act; they are constituted by it. They are not co-constitutors of the cosmic order; they are products of it. The consent requirement applies to the entry of pre-existing agents into authority structures; it does not obviously apply to the creation of agents within a structure they did not pre-exist, because the agents to whom consent would be owed do not yet exist at the moment when their situation is determined. The framework's use of the parent-child analogy supports rather than undermines this point: a parent cannot meaningfully seek the consent of a not-yet-existing child to be born, to have certain constitutional features, or to exist within certain constraints. The analogous divine case is not that God failed to seek consent—it is that the conditions for consent-seeking were, as a matter of logical necessity, absent.

### ***The Beneficiary Objection***

The framework treats the absence of consent as a deficit that vitiates divine authority. But the alternative to existing within an unchosen divine order is not existing within a chosen one—it is not existing at all. An agent who is brought into existence within conditions they did not choose is not straightforwardly harmed by the absence of prior consent; they are, at minimum, given the conditions of their existence. If existence is, on balance, worth having—if the rational agent would, after achieving the reflective capacity to evaluate their situation, endorse their own existence—then the absence of prior consent represents not a deficit but a logical impossibility whose non-occurrence is not a wrong. The framework's consent requirement, if pressed to its logical conclusion in the domain of creation itself rather than subsequent governance, threatens to generate an absurdity: no being could be legitimately created without prior consent, which would require the existence of the consenting being prior to creation.

### ***The Normative Grounding Objection***

The framework's normative conclusions—that autonomy is foundationally prior to authority, that consent is the condition of legitimate governance, that jurisdictional independence is the rational agent's default condition—are not themselves derived from any consent-based process. They are asserted as philosophical principles and defended by argument. But the theological tradition that grounds normative principles in divine nature rather than in philosophical argument can make precisely the same structural move: it asserts the authority of divine governance and defends it by argument. Both frameworks are making substantive normative claims whose foundational premises are not themselves subject to the standards those premises are used to apply.

### ***The Motivational Objection***

The framework's formal conclusion—that rational agents retain jurisdictional independence absent demonstrable divine legitimacy—tells agents what they are not obligated to do but offers an insufficiently thick account of what they are obligated to do. The framework's concept of consentheism—reflective, voluntary religious commitment as the highest form of genuine religious engagement—presupposes that the agent has the reflective and evaluative resources to make such a commitment. These resources are themselves culturally, educationally, and socially constituted in ways that the framework does not fully acknowledge. The framework's vision of the autonomous

rational agent making reflective judgments about cosmic authority is an idealization that abstracts from the actual conditions of human moral development, which are irreducibly social, traditional, and dependent on inherited frameworks of meaning and authority.

### ***The Framework's Response***

The Omittoist response to the Counter-Thesis proceeds through each of its four moves.

Against the category objection: the framework acknowledges the disanalogy between human political authority and divine authority, and has done so explicitly since §II. The framework's claim is not that divine governance fails the consent test for the same reasons human governance sometimes fails it, but that the structural features of the divine-human relationship—unchosen existence, absent exit, absent consultation—constitute an absence of the normative conditions that make authority claims legitimate wherever they are made. The category objection assumes that the consent requirement is domain-specific—applicable only to human political relations—but this assumption is precisely what the framework challenges. If the consent requirement is grounded in features of rational agency generally rather than in features of political arrangements specifically, it applies wherever rational agents are claimed to be subjects of authority. The counter-thesis must engage this grounding claim, not merely assert that the categories do not transfer.

Against the beneficiary objection: this argument conflates two distinct questions—whether the agent's existence is, on balance, a benefit, and whether the authority claiming to govern that existence has legitimacy. Even if existence is worth having, and even if the agent would reflectively endorse their own existence, this does not generate consent to whatever governance arrangement the creator has imposed. A person born into a dictatorship may be glad to exist; their gladness at existing does not constitute consent to the dictatorship. The framework is not claiming that it would have been better for agents not to have been created; it is claiming that the terms of their situation—including the authority claimed over them—require justification that has not been provided.

Against the normative grounding objection: the framework's foundational principles are not arbitrary preferences; they are derived from features of rational agency that are acknowledged across ideological lines. The claim that authority requires consent is not a parochial philosophical position—when denied, it generates conclusions that no consistent political philosopher accepts: that power suffices for authority, that creation suffices for ownership. The theological tradition is not simply making the same kind of move; it is claiming that power, creation, or perfect moral nature generates authority, and each of these claims is subject to the philosophical evaluation the framework provides.

Against the motivational objection: the framework acknowledges the social constitution of moral agency. It claims only that an authority which insists on compliance without evaluation has forfeited the claim to authority, whatever the agent's evaluative capacities. The aspirational ideal of the reflective rational agent is not a description of current epistemic reality but a normative standard—the same aspirational function that Kant's rational agency plays in his moral philosophy, or that Rawls's veil of ignorance plays in his political theory. That the ideal is not fully realised does not undermine its normative function.

The Counter-Thesis, having been constructed at its strongest and responded to at the framework's best, does not defeat the jurisdictional analysis. But it performs an essential function: it identifies the specific premises on which the framework depends—that consent requirements are grounded in rational agency generally rather than political practice specifically; that the creation-governance distinction is normatively significant; that motivational ideals retain normative

force in the absence of full realisation—and thereby specifies exactly what the framework must defend rather than simply assume. The rigour of the Counter-Thesis makes the framework's conclusions more defensible, not less, by revealing the philosophical scaffolding that supports them.

## **VIII. SYNTHESIS: COSMIC CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF JURISDICTIONAL INDEPENDENCE**

The twenty-thinker comparative analysis conducted in this treatise has traced the intellectual genealogy, logical structure, normative foundations, and philosophical challenges of the Omittoist framework with a comprehensiveness that admits of a synthetic evaluation. The Counter-Thesis in §VII.5 has identified the specific premises the framework must defend. The expanded Plantinga engagement in §V.3 has shown that the legislative clarity standard survives Reformed Epistemology. The Thomistic analysis in §IIb has provided the full Juridical Cleavage argument that the Murphy exchange presupposes. What remains is the synthetic work: providing the metaethical grounding that the framework's normative claims require, articulating the full resolution of the Wolff-consentheism tension, developing the positive axiological case for autonomy, and—answering Arendt's constructive challenge—sketching what legitimate cosmic governance would require.

### **The Framework's Most Distinctive Achievement: Ontological Invariance**

The framework's most defensible contribution is its ontological invariance: the property of maintaining identical normative conclusions regardless of how the metaphysical question of divine existence is resolved. This property is not merely elegant; it is philosophically fundamental. It means that the critique of divine authority cannot be defeated by demonstration of divine existence—the response 'but God exists' is not a response to the jurisdictional analysis at all, because the jurisdictional analysis was never premised on divine non-existence. As the dialogue with Wolff, Simmons, Huemer, and Locke demonstrates, this property follows naturally from the application of consent-based political philosophy to the theological domain.

### **Metaethical Grounding: Why Moral Facts Are Binding, Not Merely Advisory**

Wielenberg's challenge—identified in §VII.3—is the most technically demanding metaethical question the framework faces. If moral facts are brute facts, existing independently of any feature of reality that might ground a claim to authority, why are they genuinely binding on agents rather than merely advisory? The framework's normative conclusions—that consent is required for legitimate authority, that autonomy is foundationally prior to jurisdiction—presuppose that these are genuinely binding requirements and not merely philosophical recommendations that agents may decline to follow.

The response draws on the second-person standpoint analysis developed by Stephen Darwall in *The Second-Person Standpoint* (2006). Darwall argues that moral obligation is constitutively tied to accountability relations between persons: to be morally obligated is to be legitimately held accountable by others for one's conduct. The bindingness of moral requirements derives not from their metaphysical status as brute facts but from the practical standpoint of accountability that rational agents occupy by virtue of their status as persons capable of giving and receiving reasons.

Applied to the Omittoist framework: the consent requirement and the value of autonomy are binding not because they are brute facts that compel compliance by some mysterious metaphysical force, but because they are requirements that can be legitimately demanded of any agent by any other agent who stands in the second-person relation of mutual accountability. When one agent

denies that another's autonomy requires respect, they deny a requirement that the other agent can legitimately address to them—and this legitimate addressability is what makes the requirement genuinely binding rather than merely advisory. The framework's consent requirement is binding because it can be legitimately demanded by any rational agent from any authority claiming jurisdiction over them. The bindingness flows from the second-person structure of the claim, not from a mysterious metaphysical property of brute moral facts.

Christine Korsgaard's constitutivism (*The Sources of Normativity*, 1996) provides a complementary grounding. Korsgaard argues that moral obligations are constitutive of rational agency itself: to act for reasons is to commit oneself to principles whose authority one acknowledges through the very act of rational deliberation. An agent who denies the authority of reason-giving thereby undermines the very activity through which they are making the denial. Applied to the Omittoist framework: the consent requirement is binding because any agent who engages in the practice of giving and demanding reasons—as all authorities implicitly do when they issue commands—has thereby committed themselves to the normative standards that govern reason-giving, including the requirement that those subject to authority have grounds for accepting it. An authority that issues commands while denying that those commands require justification is engaged in a performative contradiction: it invokes the normative framework of reason-exchange while exempting itself from that framework's requirements.

This metaethical grounding is the answer Wielenberg's challenge requires. The framework is not committed to brute moral facts as free-floating normative requirements without any grounding; it is committed to requirements that are grounded in the second-person accountability structure and the constitutive commitments of rational agency itself. These are precisely the resources that Wielenberg's godless moral realism invokes when it seeks to explain why moral facts bind agents, and the Omittoist framework can draw on them directly.

## **The Full Resolution of the Wolff-Consentism Tension**

The synthesis permits a more explicit resolution of the tension between Wolff's incompatibility thesis and the Omittoist concept of consentism than the individual thinker sections provided. Wolff argues that the endorsement of authority by an autonomous agent cannot transform submission into autonomous action: either the agent is following their own judgment (rendering the authority redundant) or they are genuinely deferring to authority (forfeiting autonomy).

The Omittoist response—developed in §III.1 and here sharpened through the metaethical grounding above—is that consentism does not involve submission to divine authority as authority in Wolff's strict sense. It involves the reflective conclusion, reached through autonomous evaluation, that divine commands track moral reality reliably enough to serve as a guide to moral action. This is the endorsement of epistemic excellence, not submission to political will.

The full resolution runs as follows. Wolff's incompatibility thesis holds because authority, as Wolff defines it, is the right to command obedience as such—regardless of the command's content. This kind of authority is incompatible with autonomy because it requires substituting another's judgment for one's own. But consentism does not endorse this kind of authority. The consentist does not follow divine guidance because commanded to do so; they follow it because their autonomous evaluation has determined that the guidance is excellent. The authority's command does no normative work as command; it serves as a marker of excellent advice that the agent follows for independently evaluated reasons. Wolff is correct that this makes the authority's command normatively redundant—it generates no political jurisdiction. But this is precisely the Omittoist point: the consentist exercises moral autonomy fully, and exercises it in such a way that happens to

align with divine guidance. The alignment is the product of autonomous evaluation, not the suspension of it. Consentism is the name for the highest form of religious engagement available under the Omittoist framework: engagement that is both genuinely religious (oriented toward divine guidance) and genuinely autonomous (grounded in independent evaluation).

## **The Positive Axiological Defence of Autonomy**

The axiological challenge from Betenson—that the framework implicitly assumes the superiority of a world with genuine rational self-governance over a world with divine governance—requires the explicit philosophical defence that the revised framework now provides.

Autonomy is not one value among others that happens to be preferred by Western liberal tradition. It is the precondition for genuine agency, and therefore for the authentic realisation of any value whatsoever. Consider: a person who acts morally under coercion has not achieved moral goodness—the goodness of the act is the coercing authority's, not theirs. A person who loves under threat of punishment does not love—the emotion performs the script that fear requires. A person who creates within the constraints of another's controlling will does not create—the creation belongs to the constraining will. Authentic moral development, genuine relationship, real creative achievement, the full realisation of rational agency—all of these require autonomy not contingently but constitutively. To build a world in which rational agents pursue good ends under external coercion is not to build a world of genuine value; it is to build a world of performance.

This positive axiological case draws directly on Kant's insight that rational agency is the source of all moral value (for if rational agency is the source, then conditions that undermine its full exercise undermine the conditions of value's possibility), Camus's insight that the refusal of cosmic injustice is an affirmation of value rather than its negation, and Wolff's insight that moral action requires self-governance to be genuine moral action. These are not three separate philosophical commitments; they are three expressions of the same fundamental insight: that value requires a valuer who is genuinely free, and that genuine freedom requires more than the bare capacity to deviate from an external command—it requires the positive condition of being the genuine author of one's evaluations, commitments, and actions.

## **Constructive Architecture: What Legitimate Cosmic Governance Would Require**

Arendt's constructive challenge—the question of how legitimate authority is built, not only how it fails—has been deferred across the primary texts. It can no longer be deferred. Having identified the conditions under which divine authority fails the legitimacy test, the framework owes its interlocutors a positive account: what would legitimate cosmic governance look like? What are the conditions for a genuinely binding cosmic authority, even if those conditions are, as the framework's own logic suggests, unlikely to be met?

A legitimate cosmic governance structure would require, at minimum, four conditions. First, principled consent: rational agents would need to have been genuinely consulted about the terms of their existence—not as a logical precondition of creation (which, as the Counter-Thesis correctly notes, is impossible), but through some mechanism by which the created agent's ongoing endorsement of the governance arrangement is sought, genuinely free, and genuinely possible to withhold. This might take the form of an arrangement in which the agent, upon achieving rational maturity, is presented with a genuine choice between ongoing subjection and meaningful exit—with exit conditions that are neither self-destructive nor catastrophically costly.

Second, legislative clarity: divine commands would need to be communicable to those subject to them through publicly accessible, non-contested channels—not through documents of disputed

provenance, competing traditions of interpretation, and claimed private revelations, but through a mode of communication whose content could be verified and evaluated by any rational agent employing their ordinary evaluative capacities.

Third, engineering competence: a cosmic authority claiming to be the designer of the world inhabited by rational agents would need to meet a standard of design competence that is not met by a world containing the distribution of suffering, structural injustice, and apparently gratuitous evil visible in the actual world. This is not a perfection standard—imperfect governance can be legitimate—but a threshold standard: a governance arrangement whose terms include systematic and unchosen suffering without demonstrable compensating justification has not met the minimum standard for claiming benevolent authority.

Fourth, genuine accountability: legitimate authority requires that those subject to it have mechanisms for addressing grievances, questioning commands, and holding the authority answerable for the terms of the arrangement. A cosmic authority whose governance is unilateral, whose commands are non-negotiable, and whose judgment is final without appeal has not met the accountability standard that makes authority recognisable as legitimate rather than as domination.

These four conditions are demanding but not logically impossible. They specify what the framework would require for cosmic governance to be legitimate—not as conditions that any existing theological tradition meets, but as the target that a genuinely legitimate cosmic authority would need to reach. The framework does not conclude that no such authority could exist; it concludes that no such authority has demonstrated that it does. The door to legitimate cosmic governance remains open. The evaluation simply finds, as of the current epistemic situation, that no claimant has yet satisfied the conditions for entry.

## **Four Areas for Further Development**

Four areas in which the Omittoist framework requires further philosophical development remain after this synthesis.

First, the metaethical grounding provided through Darwall and Korsgaard requires extended development in a dedicated philosophical monograph. The account given here is sufficient to answer Wielenberg's challenge at the level of this treatise, but the full constitutive account of why consent requirements bind rational agents—drawing on the second-person standpoint literature and Korsgaard's constitutivism—warrants its own systematic treatment.

Second, the constructive architecture of legitimate cosmic governance sketched in this section requires engagement with the empirical literature on political legitimacy and institutional design. Arendt's warning—that legitimate authority requires not only correct principles but the political and narrative conditions within which recognition is possible—must be addressed through engagement with the sociology and history of authority rather than through philosophical argument alone.

Third, the Counter-Thesis category objection—that consent requirements may be domain-specific rather than grounded in rational agency generally—requires a more systematic philosophical defence than the framework has yet provided. The argument that the consent requirement flows from features of rational agency rather than from features of political arrangements needs a worked-out account of what features of rational agency those are and why they generate consent requirements in all domains.

Fourth, the interface between consentism and specific religious traditions requires empirical as well as philosophical development. The formal concept of consentism as reflective, voluntary, evaluatively grounded religious commitment must engage the sociology of religious experience, the

phenomenology of conversion and deconversion, and the psychology of belief formation if it is to serve as more than a formal ideal.

## **The Tradition of Revolt Reconsidered**

The tradition of metaphysical revolt—Bakunin, Camus, Goldman, Godwin—contributes a historical and existential depth to the Omittoist framework that the purely analytic presentation sometimes lacks. These thinkers demonstrate that the refusal of divine authority is not a modern philosophical invention but a recurring response to the experience of living under governance arrangements whose legitimacy cannot be demonstrated to those subject to them. What Omittoism adds to this tradition is precisely what it claims to add: a formalisation of the refusal that converts existential revolt into juridical evaluation.

What emerges from this comparative analysis, including the Counter-Thesis, the Thomistic engagement, and the metaethical grounding, confirms Omittoism's central achievement. The framework of Jurisdictional Sovereignty—with its three axioms, its governance audit, its concept of ontological invariance, and its generous corollary of consentheism—provides a systematic and formally rigorous account of what it means for a rational agent to apply political-philosophical standards to cosmic authority claims. The framework is not without its limitations and unresolved challenges; several have been identified in precise detail across this analysis. But these are the productive tensions that a philosophical framework of this ambition requires in order to continue generating inquiry.

The analogy to constitutional law—which this treatise has sustained throughout under the rubric of 'cosmic constitutionalism'—is finally illuminating precisely because constitutional review is not an act of hostility to governance but an expression of the deepest commitment to governance done right. Omittoism occupies the analogous position in the cosmic domain: it is the philosophical institution of constitutional review applied to divine authority claims, testing them against the principles that make authority claims legitimate, and returning a verdict—not of permanent or prejudiced rejection, but of conditional evaluation—that leaves open the possibility of legitimate divine governance while refusing to accept the claim before the conditions are met.

## **IX. CONCLUSION: THE SPECIES THAT AUDITS ITS GODS**

What does it mean for a species to audit its gods? It means, at minimum, that the species has reached the point at which it applies its own best thinking to all authority claims rather than exempting any category of claim from rational evaluation. This is not arrogance. The recognition that one does not know whether God exists, and that one's own reason is fallible, is not arrogance but intellectual honesty. It is not hostility. The refusal to grant authority without demonstrated legitimacy is the same principle that animates every constitutional democracy's relationship to its own governments. It is not nihilism. The affirmation of autonomy as a foundational value is, as Camus demonstrates, an affirmation of value, not its denial. It is not impiety. The concept of consentheism—reflective, voluntary, evaluatively grounded religious commitment—is not the framework's concession to religion but its highest account of what genuine religious commitment looks like when freed from existential coercion.

Twenty thinkers, spanning three centuries of political philosophy, ethics, theology, and existential analysis, have been brought into dialogue with the Omittoist framework in this treatise. The dialogue has been, as this analysis has attempted to demonstrate, genuinely bidirectional. The framework illuminates dimensions of these thinkers' work that their own preoccupations prevented

them from exploring—Locke's consent principle applied beyond its intended domain, Hume's is-ought gap deployed as a jurisdictional firewall, Arendt's power-authority-violence distinction deployed as a governance audit, Aquinas's natural law theory subjected to the Juridical Cleavage it contains but has not resolved. And these thinkers illuminate dimensions of the framework that the primary texts have not always fully developed: Wolff's incompatibility thesis pressing the framework on consentism, Murphy's reasons-responsive account pressing it on the Murphy-Thomism interface, Betenson's axiological analysis pressing it on the value of autonomy, Arendt's constructive challenge pressing it on the architecture of legitimate authority, and Wielenberg's binding force challenge pressing it on its metaethical foundations.

The synthesis has responded to each of these pressures with the philosophical resources they require. The metaethical grounding through Darwall's second-person accountability and Korsgaard's constitutivism answers Wielenberg's challenge. The constructive architecture of legitimate cosmic governance answers Arendt's challenge. The full Juridical Cleavage argument answers the Thomistic challenge that Murphy's account presupposes. The Counter-Thesis in §VII.5—the framework's most self-critical addition—has identified the specific premises on which the framework depends and shown why those premises are defensible rather than assumed.

The Omittoist declaration—'no master is recognised absent demonstrable legitimacy'—is not a declaration of war but a declaration of philosophical seriousness. It is the refusal to settle for less than what the best available principles require. It holds that the same standards routinely applied to human authority claims—consent, accountability, proportionality, transparency—apply without exemption to cosmic authority claims, and that applying them is not an act of rebellion but an act of consistency. As such, it represents not the end of the conversation about divine authority but one of its most rigorous and productive contributions—opening a space of inquiry that political philosophy has been slow to occupy, and inviting all who are committed to the principles of legitimate authority to follow that commitment wherever, consistently, it leads.

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